



BRIAN K. VAUGHAN FIONA STAPLES

CHAPTER
TWENTY
TWO

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Saga

HotComic.net

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TWO

Saga

WRITTEN BY
BRIAN K. VAUGHAN
ART BY
FIONA STAPLES
LETTERS + DESIGN BY
FONOGRAFIKS
COORDINATED BY
ERIC STEPHENSON



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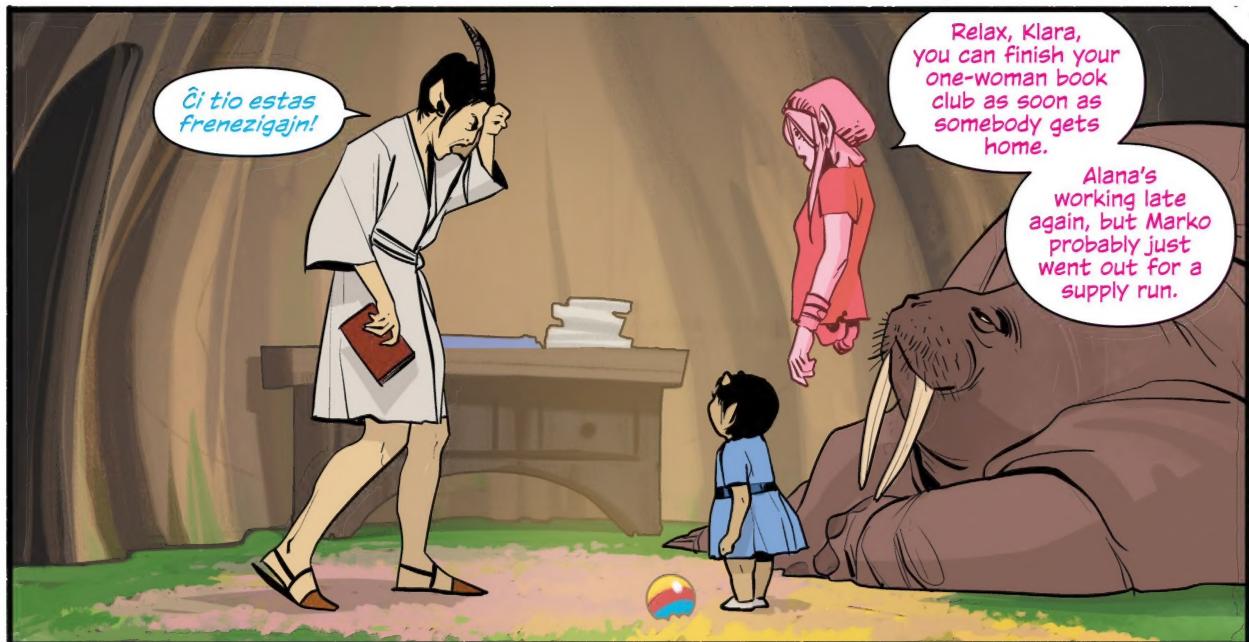
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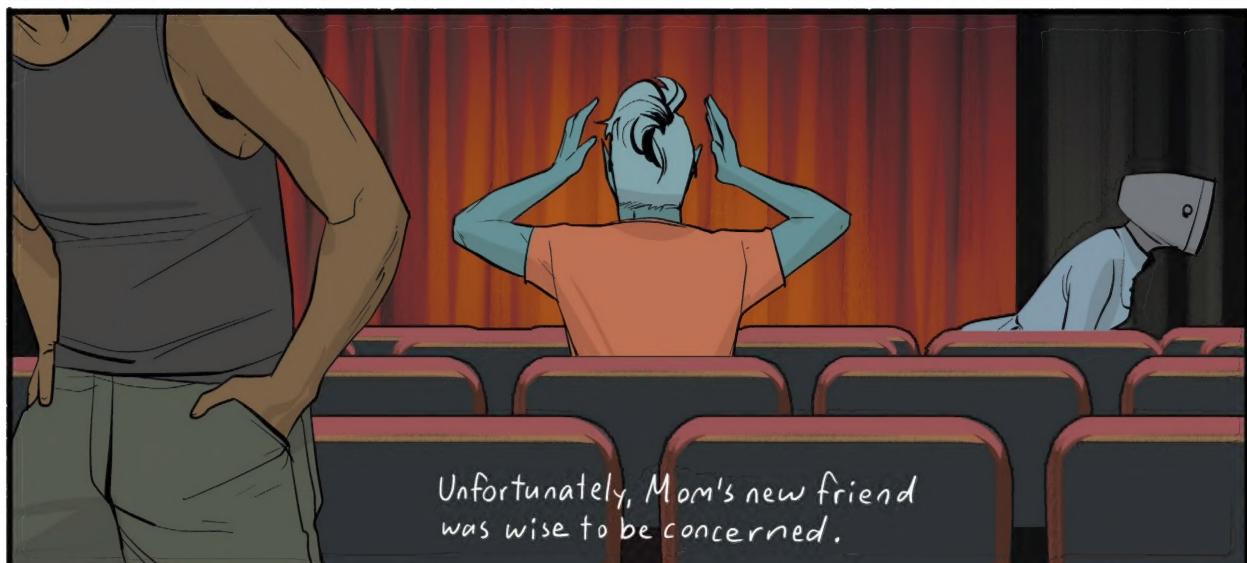
*Oopsie,
I made a
universe!*







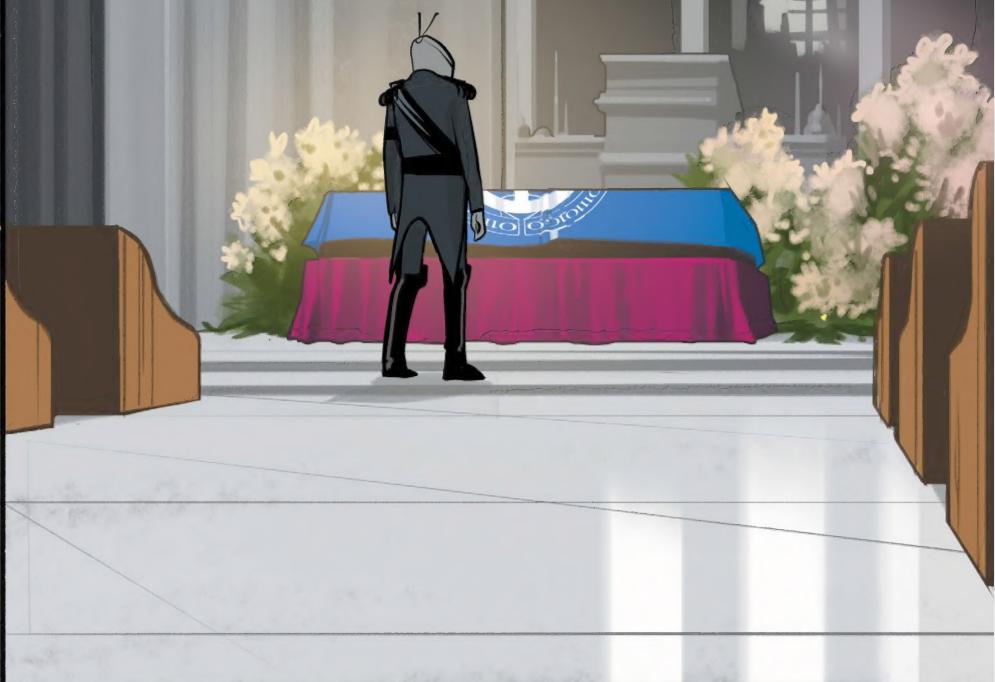




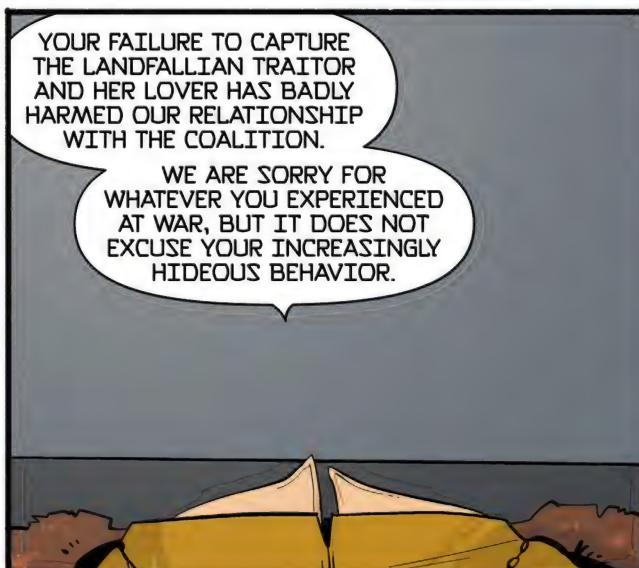
Back then, the more pressing story for my family was still unfolding in a faraway kingdom.

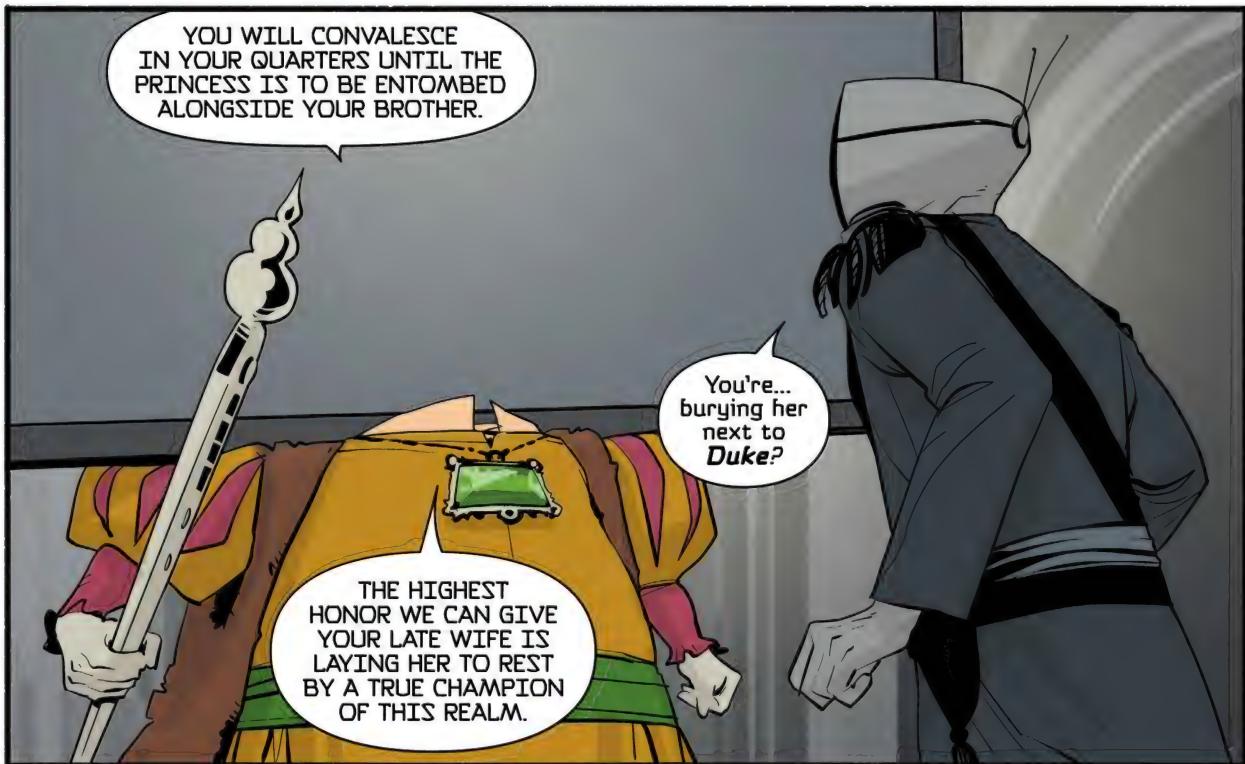
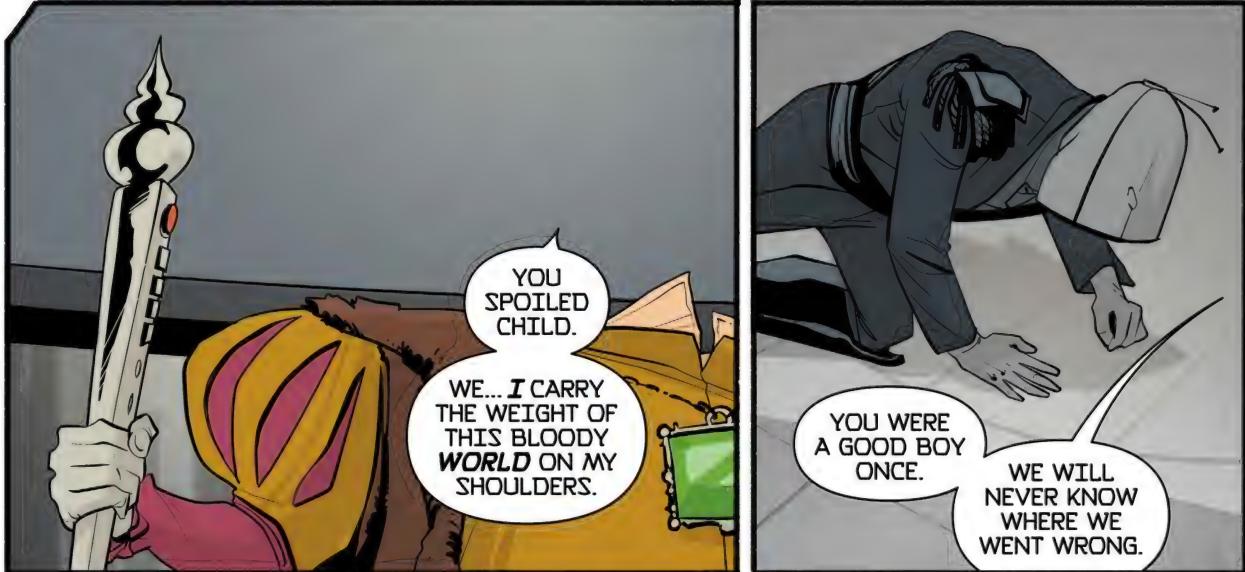


Like all stories involving real princes and princesses, there wasn't a lot of happily ever after.

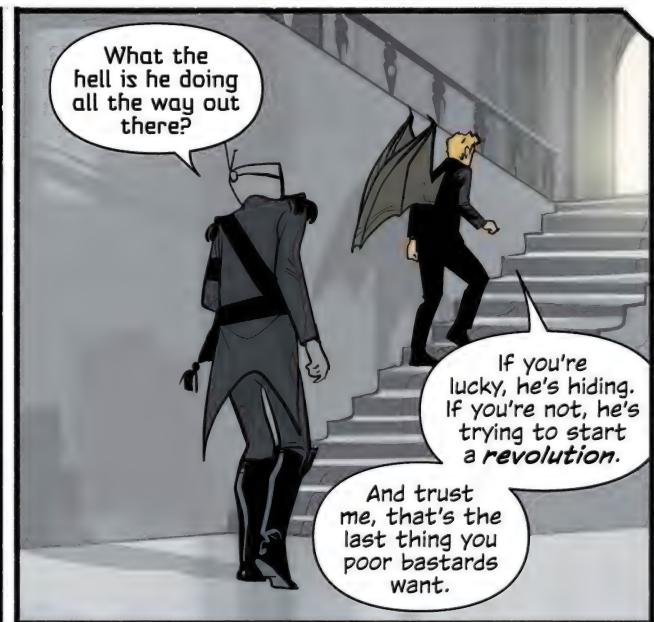
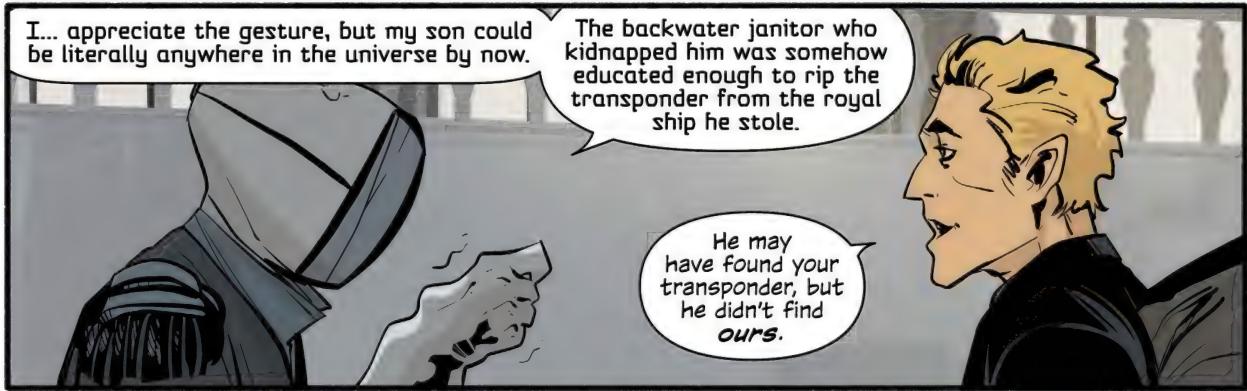


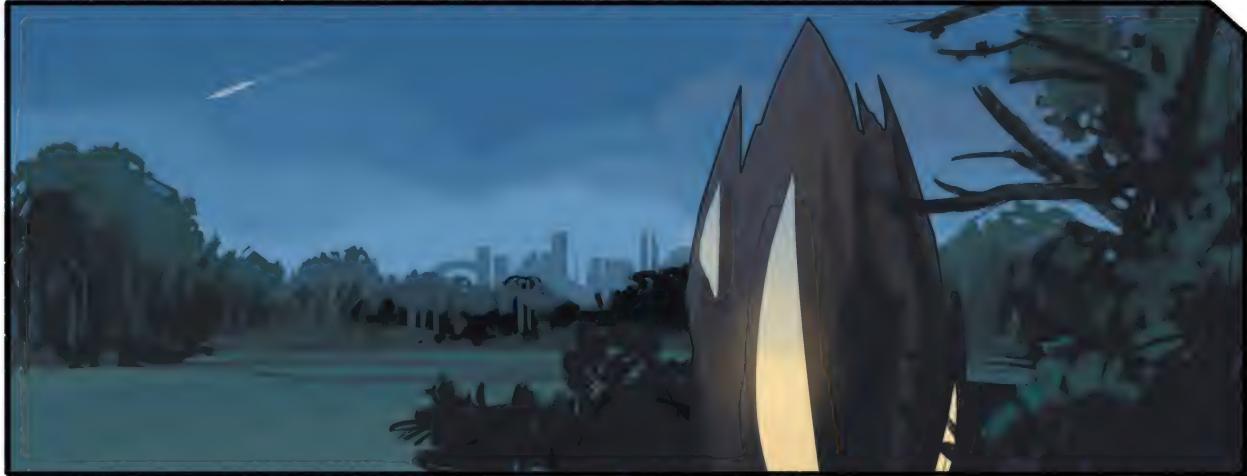








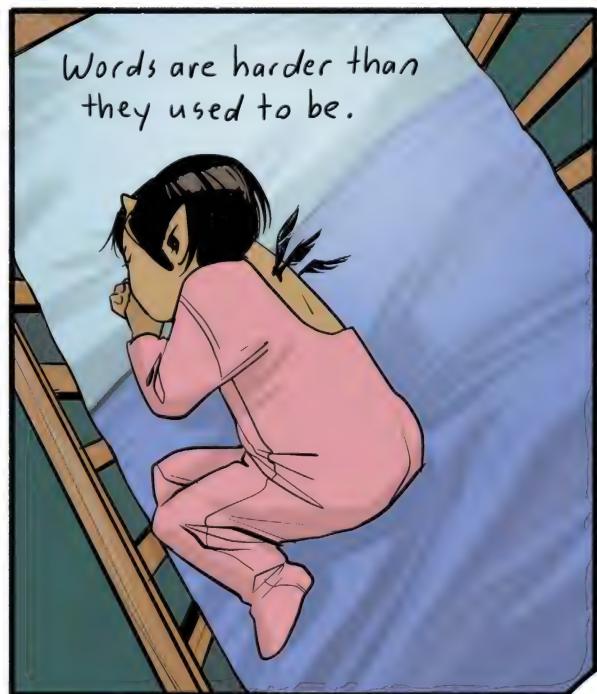






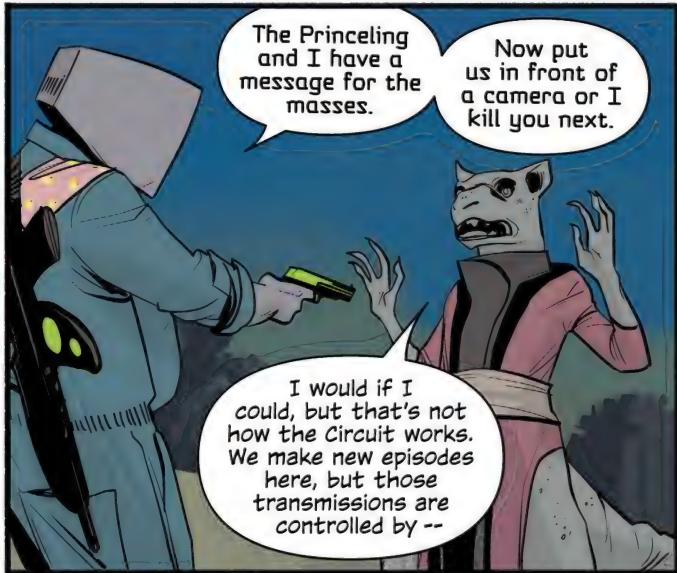












...I can get
you something
much more
valuable than
airtime.

TO BE CONTINUED

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I realize Comic-Con will be a distant and/or nonexistent memory for everyone by the time this issue hits stands, but as I type this in the halcyon days of July, I'm just a few hours away from braving the 405 to race to the big show, so no time to waste...

Dear Saga Team,

Having worked at a comic book store for over 18 years, I can say there are a lot of things wrong with the comics industry. One of the things I love about *Saga* is that it does its own thing, and does it well. It seems to me that the focus has always been on telling a great story. So I felt that I had to write this letter after reading Brian's question about variant covers and whether or not *Saga* should have them for anniversary issues, which he asked in the back of issue 20. When I saw those words my brain screamed Nooooooooo!!!

Variant covers hurt the comics industry. Ads that interrupt the story, or placed between a double page spread are wrong, especially when those books cost four and five bucks. Overpriced books hurt comics. Crossovers that span lots of titles are confusing, often irrelevant, and bad for comics. Paper that is so thin that the book is ruined by just holding it in my hands for a few minutes while I read it is bad for comics. Packaging your book in too many ways is intimidating and confusing to customers and therefore bad for comics.

Saga is refreshing because it does none of these things. At the store we can depend on having none of the above problems with your book. And therefore the book is easy to sell. We can sell it to readers who are new to comics. We can sell it to people who have walked away from big weekly stacks of comics because they are fed up with other companies' greedy practices. We can sell it to more women. And we do. And that's good for comics.

Saga is a great book that is sold strongly on the merits of the storytelling, and nothing else. That is something to be proud of. So if you want to see other artists drawing Fiona's lovely creations, please add them as pinups, yet another bonus for buying your book. Please just keep doing things your own way, and don't pay attention to what those others are doing.

Cheers,
Josh Stasinos
Salt Lake City, UT

Cheers to you, Josh. We received a ton of responses to my harebrained "25 Covers for Chapter 25" scheme, and they were easily 10-1 against such an idea, and the more I thought about it, the more I agree with everyone. As much as I enjoy occasionally seeing other great artists tackle Fiona's characters online or whatever, when it comes to the actual book, *Saga* just wouldn't be *Saga* without Staples' artwork behind the logo.

So: no alternate covers for *Saga* for the foreseeable future. Ah well, I just would have wasted all that extra dough on naval-proof gin and... I don't know, actual dough, so thanks for talking me out of such a naked cash grab.

BKV,

My preference is for no variant covers but if you or the fanbase is in favor of them, please include all of them (be it 1 or 25) in a future trade.

On another topic, I saw a family dressed as Marko, Alana and Hazel at a convention in Philadelphia. Even better (sorry), there was a young woman dressed as *Twin Peaks'* most mysterious corporeal resident, *The Log Lady*.

Love the series and I hope you and Fiona keep up the great work for years to come.

Travis Roper
Hattfield, PA

Travis, *Twin Peaks* cosplay might be the only thing in life I like more than *Saga* cosplay. Speaking of which, presuming this chapter comes out before the August 31 deadline, you still have just a few days left to enter our **Second Ever Ill-Advised *Saga* Costume Contest**, though it's too late to use my beloved regular mail, so you'll need to send your entries to our contest-only email address, please: SagaCostumeContest@gmail.com.

You know the drill: use whatever materials you like to dress up as any character (or characters) featured in any moment of our series so far. Then, snap a good picture of yourself, and send it our way, but only if you're okay with potentially being featured in these very pages. One hotshot winner gets \$500, original artwork by Fiona, and more, so hurry the fuck up!

Dear Fiona and Brian (and Hamburger of course),

First and foremost, please excuse my messy handwriting. I haven't actually seen a pen since I left high school eight years ago and almost mistook this one for a vegetable (I am equally unfamiliar with vegetables.)

Secondly, I want to warn you that I'm about to get really soppy and bullshit lovey-dovey because you guys have done something wonderful—you've managed to write and illustrate a story that practically anyone can relate to. I honestly haven't come across a single person who has read *Saga* that hasn't loved it.

For me, personally, you gave me something very special. You gave me something to smile about when I felt at my lowest, when all I wanted to do was cry—and both of you managed to make me laugh so hard and become so attached to all these characters that I didn't even think about my own sadness (don't get me wrong, I still cried, but it was good crying).

Thank you both so much for that.

Not only have you both made such a stunning cast of love

or love-to-hate characters (seriously, I still can't pick my favourite, although I am maybe leaning more slightly towards Marko's cute dope face), but you have made me love comics more than I ever thought possible. I have never re-read any of my Marvel comics as many times as I have read and re-read Volume 1 of *Saga*.

This turned into a bit of an essay! Sorry!

Thank you both again for doing what you do so well—please don't stop doing it.

Please come down to Australia sometime if you guys ever get the opportunity—we're still kind of infants when it comes to the comic scene, but I promise we're toilet trained and it would be a personal dream come true to meet you both in person.

I'm so eager for issue 20 that I can barely shut up about it. I think they're plotting to sew my moth shut at work.

Thanks again guys, and all the best.

Love,

Sarah Ward

Para Hills, South Australia

You're the best, Sarah. And I don't know about Fiona, but visiting Australia has been a lifelong dream of mine, so I'd love to attend a convention/signing/rave/whatever there. Please inform your Commonwealth Parliament of my wishes at your earliest convenience.

Dearest Brian and Fiona,

'Sup? I hope this letter finds you both well. I intended to write this letter years ago. Today I went to the New York Comic Con website to check on guest updates and saw Mr. BKV added. This made me finally sit down to write this. It was at my first NYCC two years ago that I first sort of met you and wanted to say thank you. I went mainly for the comic guests, such as both of you and some guy named Robert Kirkman. I woke up at an ungodly hour, took the two-hour train ride up, got in line, ran to the Image booth first thing, and found out tickets to the signing were gone! I was crushed!! I sulked around looking at stuff for a bit. I did get to visit Fiona and buy a print that she signed "to Brett." That was great!

Cut to the time of the signing, I kind of lingered around the floor and kept watching lucky fans get their stuff signed. I checked back after the signing and saw you sitting there signing books for a store to sell and I got the nerve to run up and just ask for a quick autograph.

"Hold it there," the security guard said. Foiled.

"Hi, I don't have a ticket, I just wanted him to sign this print."

"He's really busy and I'm sorry but you don't have a ticket," the stupid jerk only doing his job politely said.

Then it happened. You looked up and said, "It's okay, let me get that." I handed it to the not actually a stupid polite jerk who handed it to you. "Want me to make it out to Brett?"

I did. You did. Made me happy. THANK YOU!

Can't wait to see you in NY again and to thank you for your books and the ten seconds of awesomeness you showed me.

Thanks,

Brett Riley

Westmont, NJ

Whew, I thought for sure I was gonna end up being the villain of that story when your letter started, Brett. Glad things worked out.

And sorry, I'm always mortified to be surrounded by security or ticketed lines at these things. I blame the popularity of a certain Stapled One. But I will indeed be returning to the New York Comic Con this October 9–12, and Fiona unfortunately won't be attending this year, but that almost certainly guarantees shorter lines if you'd like me to scribble on something. And if you ever can't get something signed by me for whatever reason, I give you full authorization to forge my signature on anything I've ever written (but not on your mortgage refinancing application, please).

Hello Mr. Vaughan and Ms. Staples,

This is honestly the first time in my entire life that I have ever written to any comic book creators. I have been an avid fan of comics since I was in second grade, and even at one point in my childhood had dreamed of being a comic book artist (I think in second grade, I actually drew a picture of this as my future career in class, I wonder if my mom still has it...)

Now, you're probably wondering why you're receiving an invitation to my wedding, and even more so, why this is my first and probably only written correspondence I will write to comic book creators, ever.

Recently life has been incredibly busy for me, as I am now older, with more responsibilities, and definitely less free time. But, I actually just started reading individual issues of *Saga* a few days ago, and similarly to all your other works, I absolutely LOVED it. Especially since many of the themes in the story are so closely relatable to where I am at my point in life right now. However, what caught my eye was the fact that you had chosen to use snail mail as your main correspondence, which I thought was amazing!

Comics have been a part of my life for as long as I can remember, always providing me with an outlet for creativity and enjoyment. I told myself that I would marry someone who could share in the same love, but let's say back in the day, there were not as many female comic book fans as there are now.

When I first started dating Ellena, my then girlfriend, and now fiancée, we shared an incredible amount of common interests. However, she had never been interested in comics. I thought it would be an uphill battle to get her to read them, but I knew there was one series that would without a doubt hook her on the world of comics, and that was *Y: The Last Man*.

One thing that is really cool about the public library in San Francisco is that they carry graphic novels, and they happened to have *Y* in their collection. Ellena is a voracious reader and I eventually convinced her to take me up on my recommendation. She checked out Volume 1 and three days later, she was begging me for the single issues I owned. She could not wait for the latter volumes to be returned to the library, and needed to finish the story as soon as she could. After finishing the series, she ended up telling everyone and their mother that this was a story they HAD TO READ! In every instance that someone talks about comics, she somehow finds a way to join the conversation, just so she can mention *Y*. Amazingly, the mutual love for your story, Mr. Vaughan, brought us that much closer to one another in the early stages of our relationship.

I also don't want to forget you, Ms. Staples. Although my fiancée is not quite as familiar with your work yet (trust me, she will be, once I have her start reading *Saga*), I have been following your work since *Northlanders* and *DV8*, and

I can't even express how crazy talented I think you are. I was so stoked when I heard that you would be working with Mr. Vaughan on *Saga*. Your art is so beautiful and inspiring and you simply amaze me with each page I read. There are moments I just sit there ogling at one of your pages, no joke!

So, here we are four years later, about to get married in August. I told Ellena about your handwritten letter columns, and she said it might be a lot of fun to send you all an invitation to our wedding. We both suspect that there is a very slim chance any of you would be able to join us for the wedding, but, since you had such an impact on defining our relationship, she thought it would be a great opportunity to thank you both and show you our appreciation for your craft. I thought that was such an amazing idea and here I am writing the first handwritten letter in quite some time.

Thank you both for sharing your stories with us and taking us to wonderful worlds we hope to grow old with and eventually share one day with our children. We both think you are unbelievably talented individuals, and we only wish you the best, and continued success in your careers. Seriously, THANK YOU for being so AWESOME!

Cheers,
Nick Chen
Orinda, CA

Congratulations, Nick and Ellena! So cool to hear that comics are an important part of your relationship.

And thanks very much for the invite. For those who haven't heard, if you're a *Saga* reader who invites us to your wedding, there's an excellent chance that Fiona, Eric Stephenson, the mysterious Fonografiks and I (or some combination of us) will show up at your ceremony. We will drink your wine, we will eat your salmon cakes, we will make out with your groomsmen.

Sadly, the team and I aren't able to attend your big day, Nick and Ellena, but we hope you'll enjoy a little something from us off your registry: one \$18 "Heath Coupe Line" Bread & Butter Plate. May its microwave-safe ceramic last as long as your joyous union.

Dear Brian,

I assume you get thousands of pieces of fan mail and hundreds from saps like me—the guys (and girls) who desperately want to edit comics but have no writing credentials nor artistic merit. But, this sap has to try, right?

Before I go any further about me, let me say that I love your work. When the day comes (and it's coming) when comics are treated universally as equals to other art forms, I know you and Fiona will be pointed to as paragons in the comics canon. (I know this is getting sycophantic, but last one, promise!) The way you use panels for your work reminds me of how Richard Wilbur uses meter for his poems. (I hope this high praise doesn't make you too uncomfortable if only because it's true.)

I started my career out of college in publishing thinking I could parlay book editing experience into a comics editing position. I soon realized that however hard becoming a book editor is, becoming a comics editor is that much harder. It turns out reading comics theory can't stack up against an internship at Marvel or DC, which was the only avenue the few editors I happened to meet told me to take.

So I guess I'd like to ask you your thoughts: what is an aspiring comics editor to do to get his/her foot in the door that

doesn't require winning the lottery or taking out a small loan?

I'd be unflaggingly grateful for any thoughts you have on the matter. If not I'll remain an unflagging fan and reader (and buyer) of your work. Thank you!

Best,
Michael F.
Astoria, NY

Thanks for the kind words and fascinating question, Michael. Readers often ask me how to become a comic writer or artist, but I actually have no idea how one becomes an editor. And part of the reason I came to Image was to force myself to work without any kind of editorial assistance. It's been challenging, and I don't recommend it for everyone, but with *Saga*, I wanted to ensure as little artistic interference between my fellow creators and our audience as possible (which is why our esteemed publisher Eric is credited as the book's "coordinator").

That said, I've benefitted significantly from working for and with editors in the past, and perhaps the best of the many world-class editors I had the privilege of working with is the legendary Diana Schutz, Executive Editor at Dark Horse Comics.

Because almost all editors have to work on multiple books simultaneously, it's impossible to ask them to give an individual title as much care and attention as that book's own creators... but Diana somehow cares even MORE. I'll never forget getting a frantic weekend email from her about some minor punctuation error she'd caught in a new collected version of a miniseries I wrote called *The Escapists* right before it went to press. And she was asking my permission to fix it, in case I'd screwed up intentionally!

Diana is a genius who makes everything she touches better, so I reached out to her with your question, Michael, and she was generous enough to send this reply:

Getting a job as an editor at a comics publishing company is like getting a job at any other company: you need to meet the person who does the hiring, and then you have to convince that person to hire you. I don't mean to sound trite, but that's pretty much how it works.

I got my first job as an assistant editor at Marvel Comics in the mid-1980s because Chris Claremont recommended me to then-X-Men editor Ann Nocenti, both of whose kindness I immediately repaid by quitting four days later, having realized, too late and much to my horror, that I just wasn't cut out for work at a big corporation like Marvel.

Don't do that!

But the first step really is meeting people in the industry. And to that end, I recommend going to conventions and talking to other editors. Most comics editors break in at the level of assistant and learn the ropes while working for someone with more experience. Comics editors usually hire their own assistants, so take a look through the comics you enjoy and make it a point to meet the editors of those titles. That's a good place to start, anyway.

Living in Astoria is a plus, since there are only so many comics publishing houses (a lot fewer than book publishers) and the big ones are still in New York—for now, anyway. Almost all publishing companies expect their editors to work on-site (and then at home nights and weekends in order to make sure all

the work gets done, but that's a story for another time). Very few publishers are going to pay to move an assistant editor to wherever the publisher happens to be located, so you have to be where the publisher is.

You're right that reading any of the current Comics Studies scholarship won't prepare you for a job in comics publishing. I know! I've been teaching a Comics Art & Literature course since 2002 at one of the local community colleges here in Portland. That said, I have hired three assistants from my classes throughout the years. But learning how to deconstruct comics is really fundamentally very different from making them. You'd be better off learning how to operate a Xerox machine properly!

Aside from conventions, some editors have made the necessary publishing contacts by working in retail first: learning the intricacies of the direct market can be pretty helpful when it comes to editing, since much of the job will involve figuring out what will sell and/or how to make things sell. Another way of making publishing contacts is to begin doing interviews and writing reviews for the fan press. I did all these things (often for very little or no money) from 1978 till 1984, when I finally made the jump into publishing. Though the industry was a lot smaller then, the opportunities are a lot greater now, especially with the advent of the internet and all the fan sites that exist. Getting your name known that way means that when your application shows up at a comics publishing company, you're more than just a resumé.

And yes, interning. No, you don't get paid. But how many comics writers and artists toiled for years without payment, practicing their craft until such time as they were good enough to get paid? Almost all of them! And the comics industry demands no less of a commitment from its editors. I guess it depends just how important this really is to you.

And getting hired, by the way, is just the first step. Staying hired is a whole 'nother ballgame, involving attention to detail, the ability to multitask, project management and team-building skills, and knowing how to spell sycophantic correctly. But that's the subject of another letter. Good luck!

Diana Schutz
Portland, OR

Thanks again, Diana. You are one of my favorite human beings. But please ignore any of my typos you inevitably spotted in this issue.

Dear Brian and Fiona,

Well, I've been reading comics now for the better part of half my 19 years, during which time I've scanned letter columns in silence. Waiting for the day I'd escape the semi-darkness and finally write a damn letter. I suppose I just felt I had nothing to say. Whatever "nothing" is, I thought it wasn't worth contributing to the discussion, in my self-deprecating mind. Now, the vow of silence has ended—thanks for giving me reason to discard my monastic robes to run freely in the forests of To Be Continued. (We can form a new order, perhaps? "The Brotherhood of First-Time Letter Writers," with a Franciscan twist. And the BFLW for short...we'll work on it.)

Anyway, I just finished Chapter 20. Beautiful and brilliant as always. But a Twizzler (which I can't eat, because gluten. You know, celiac probs.) twist. Your stories are always so rich with characters, and involve realities so comparable to our world's:

politics, economics, war, love, people. Now, peasant/popular unrest? The Robot Kingdom sits comfortably at the table of Coalition powers, with what is clearly a complacent air and dismissive regard for their domestic concerns at hand. Louis and Marie sit quietly at Versailles eating cake, until Robot Janitor arrives. What would the Reign of Terror look like rolling TV heads instead of bewigged human ones? I look forward (nervously) to see where our sword-mop wielding Dengo takes this, princeling under arm. Whichever way it goes, I'm sure it'll change a thing or two for the prols of the Robot Kingdom, and certainly for those feudal overlords, too. Civil unrest also has a funny way of forcing desperate regimes to neglect conflicts abroad, so to save the ship of state. Wondering how this particular inter-planetary war will be affected. Can't wait to see how this plays out, Brian, in what is always genius form.

As thanks for your wondrous comic, I give you—along with my continued readership—several comeback "nifty notes" and a package of Pop Rocks I received for my birthday. Both to be used at your discretion. You hear it all the time, but it never hurts to reiterate truths: your work brings people joy. It does for me, and also to my comic shop "family" at Comic City in Pontiac. Jenn in particular—who introduced me to your tale. So thank you for bringing people together with the beauty of your comics; for creating a world I've come to love and, I might add, for helping in the struggle to keep USPS alive. You and my mom should form an organization of some sort. I will gladly assist in this endeavor, starting with this letter. Oh, and I'm really enjoying Private Eye and the whole PanelSyndicate.com concept. Great stuff. Thank you again, and sie sind toll! (It's always nice to end in German.)

All the best,
Connor Newton
Waterford, MI

P.S. Still trying to turn more people on to Saga. Disappointed by a few failures thus far, though most of my attempts involved non-comic readers. That probably explains the insanity. Regardless, I'll still be passing Saga around like an illuminated (thanks, Fiona!) prayerbook, seeking converts.

Now hold on. Franciscan references? Reign of Terror analogies? An artful signoff in another language? How the hell are you only 19 years old?

Connor, for your insightful and delightful missive, my sporadically loyal dachshund Hamburger K. Vaughan has named YOU winner of this month's trappings from the Almighty Prize Drawer: a signed copy of this very issue, a punctured nine of spades playing card I utilized to gain access to a meeting of a certain secret society, and a Hello Deli kitchen check for a "Paul Shaffer" (seriously one of the better sandwiches in New York City), handwritten by Rupert G. These totems are powerful, son, so use them wisely.

For now, I hope you'll all meet us back here in thirty for Chapter Twenty-three, as a major betrayal has significant consequences for our extended family. Also, is it finally time for a new Reader Survey in the next To Be Continued? Ready your stamps for action...

Hitting the road,
Brian

A RESENTFUL DEPUTY. A SHADY MINING TYCOON. A FAMILY OF ALIEN HILLBILLIES. A MASSACRE.

"My favorite new comic."

-Brian K. Vaughan

JAY FAERBER SCOTT GODLEWSKI RON RILEY THOMAS MAUER

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OCTOBER
SOMETHING WICKED
THIS WAY COMES

w y t c h e s

witch (wîch) *n.* [ME wicche < OE wicce, fem. of wieca, sorcerer, akin to NL *wicken*, to use ~~the~~ *OE* *weik*, to separate (hence se *side* or *relatives*) > *WICHT* wichs, holy. OB v. g. idg. 1 a person who ~~man~~ having supernatural power as by a pact with ~~good~~ or evil spirits; sorceress ~~ugly and ill~~ tempered or ~~wicked~~ woman; follower of ~~white magic or~~ ~~of WICCA~~ 4 Uniform ~~a bewitching or fascinating~~ woman or girl 5 short for WATER WITCH] — *vt.* 1 to put a magic spell on; bewitch 2 [*Archaic*] to charm; fascinate — *vi.* DOWSE — *wit' h-like adj.* — *wits* *dj.* *Witcher* *witchiest*

From the bestselling creative team behind
Batman: The Black Mirror

Scott Snyder | Jock



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